

POLICY BRIEF (#3)

Prepared for the Health Reform Implementation Support Group (HRISG)
Meeting on May 16, 2013

INTRODUCTION

- Human resources in the health care and the quality of their management hold the greatest potential for improved health sector performance.
- A well-functioning health care system is a prerequisite to strong health care outcomes. Systems pursuing continuous improvements use indicators to measure their strengths and weaknesses and employ collected and analyzed data for informed decision making.
- Transparency and accountability are essential indicators of strong health care. Systems scoring high on these indicators tend to be more responsive to the needs, preferences, and expectations of the people they serve.
- Monitoring and evaluation of health system performance and cooperation with stakeholders at all levels of health governance are essential to promote system transparency and accountability which enable the responsiveness to the needs of the people it serves.

BACKGROUND

Improving human resources in healthcare has been one of the priorities of national health care institutions and international donors in Albania. A lot of progress has been made over the years but more needs to be done to effectively tackle issues across this priority area in the health care sector.

The strength of the health system in Albania is measured through 138 health performance indicators. A sub-set of indicators, for instance, measures the effectiveness of the system (health outcomes) and its responsiveness. A system of customized regional health system performance indicators is being currently piloted in the Lezha and Korca regions. It will monitor the strength of the regional systems, including how responsive they are to the needs of the population in the regions.

POLICY DISCUSSION

As one of the services-based sectors of the economy, health care is particularly dependent on the quality and type of its human resources for its success. Recognizing that health care system's most critical success factor are its Human Resources (HR), issues of human resources and their management deserve the utmost and urgent attention of decision makers at national and regional levels. The issue of human resources, human resource management (including increased staff accountability) and human resource development are strategic in nature and need to be addressed through well-structured and implementable long-term strategy and plans.

Health policy and planning becomes more effective when performance measurement data and information is used systematically as a basis for health policy decision making. The quality of the M&E process informing continuous health system improvement at the national and regional levels advances when it is guided by evidence. And evidence-based decision making supports system transparency.

Indicators related to health system responsiveness, such as customer complaints need to be strengthened. This can be achieved using a more diverse set of channels to collect customer feedback and taking measures to improve the quantity and quality of such feedback. The overarching objective is to enable the health system to close a critical feedback loop stretching from the customer through the health care provider to the health policy maker and back to the provider. Making this feedback loop effective is essential to informing improvements that can make the system more responsive and reputable in the perceptions of the people that it aims to serve.

RECOMMENDED POLICY ACTION

- Organize a forum/conference on issues of Human Resources and Human Resources Management in health care to:
 - Raise awareness on the missing critical role of healthcare workers in successful health system improvement; and
 - Identify the main principles and approaches for developing Albania's Human Resources Strategy in Health Care.
- Create structures and mechanisms for patient feedback, including patient complaints and complaint resolution mechanism in order to enable a more systematic assessment of the health system responsiveness and ways to address customer concerns more rapidly and effectively.
- Continue to strengthen the health policy and planning processes at the regional level by establishing M&E groups with representatives from key regional health institutions not only in Lezha and Korca but also in other regions. Information collected and analyzed through a regional level M&E process should be used to identify issues, suggest solutions, and enable comparison of regional health system performance, as well as provide basis for evidence-based health policy making at the regional levels.

CONCLUSION

- The 2011 health system performance report is an improved source of information, analysis, and ideas for health system improvement compared to the 2010 report. Future health system performance reports should aim to further strengthen the quality of analysis and recommendations in support of improved health policy decision making.